

Written Testimony on HB6501 **AN ACT CONCERNING THE STREAMLINING OF CERTAIN PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.**

Comments are specific to Section 6 and Section 7 of the HB

My name is Ralph Scarpino. I reside in Barkhamsted. I retired from the DEEP in 2013, Division of Forestry, after 39 years of service and held the position of Program Supervisor of Forest Protection for 23 years. My primary job was managing the wildland fire program. I was appointed as a Commissioner to the Northeast Forest Fire Protection Compact (NFFPC) in August 2017 by then Governor Malloy. The NFFPC is a mutual aid alliance among the New England states, New York, 5 Canadian provinces, four federal fire agencies, and the NY City Fire Department.

- 1) **Sec. 6:** Technical Revision to Sec 23-37(d) eliminating statutory conflict with Sec 23-35 and 23-55 whereby the State Fire Warden can maintain trained and equipped fire crews for BOTH in-state and out-of-state forest fire response.

This technical revision is very important to maintain readiness and responsiveness in wildfire suppression especially in smaller eastern states where there is not a large federal wildfire presence. This revision is needed to allow the use of all qualified Connecticut resources to be utilized in their complete capacity and allows maximum flexibility and optimum management options. There is no cost associated with this revision.

- 2) **Sec. 7:** Technical Revision to Sec 23-53 inserting Article XV which extends Article IX liability provisions to other Forest Fire Compacts

ARTICLE XV

The provisions of Article IX of this compact which relate to mutual aid in combating, controlling, or preventing forest fires shall be operative as between any state party to this compact and any other state which is party to a regional forest fire protection compact in another region: Provided that the legislature of such other state shall have given its assent to such mutual aid provisions of this compact.

This revision allows for every state to be able to assist their neighbors and fellow states with their complete capabilities. Often valuable resources are close by but the National system of response is complicated and often ordered resources are flown in from around the country when they may be available within a half days drive. This allows for more efficient and cost effective response. In addition, this affords the same liability protections between Compacts as within its own member Compact.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please get these minor but very essential revisions included in the statute.

Ralph Scarpino

Barkhamsted